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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



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4 OF 6

PARENTAL ADVISORY



The Night Has Come

AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

Creative Director & Executive Director: STEPHEN KING

Script: ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA

Art: MIKE PERKINS

Color Art: LAURA MARTIN

Lettering: VC'S JOE SABINO

Cover: TOMM COKER WITH LAURA MARTIN

Production: MAYELA GUTIERREZ

Assistant Editor: RACHEL PINNELAS

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Publisher: DAN BUCKLEY

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LAUREN SANKOVITCH, JOHN DENNING and JEFF SUTER.**

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Months ago, a flu-like virus swept the globe, killing off 99% of the world's population. Now, it's up to the survivors to piece together a new life--and establish the new order.

The Boulder Free Zone is populated by those united in cautious hope, drawn to the light and wisdom of the late Mother Abigail. In Las Vegas, conversely, the Dark Man known as Randall Flagg presides over his followers, rebuilding and preparing for war.

At Mother Abigail's behest, four men--Glen, Ralph, Larry and Stu--have set off on foot to face their adversary. Among the horrors they encounter is the picked-over body of a former ally, Harold, whose loyalty to the Dark Man cost him his life.

Meanwhile, Flagg himself grows more troubled by telltale signs that his plans are unraveling. For instance, his pyromaniac henchman, the Trashcan Man, virtually destroyed Flagg's military operation. Now Trashy wanders the desert in search of something to redeem himself in his master's eyes--and finds it behind a door marked with a radiation symbol.

After becoming Flagg's bride, Nadine confronts him with a prophecy that four travelers are coming to defeat him. In a fit of rage, Flagg throws her off a balcony to her death--remembering too late that she was carrying his child...his legacy.

Even as Flagg attempts to reassure himself with thoughts of torture, the travelers encounter a more earthly obstacle--a collapsed stretch of highway blocking their path. As they attempt to cross, Stu loses his footing, leaving him with a broken leg, unable to continue.

The men make the agonizing decision to go on without their friend--despite their fear that they might never meet again.



Larry, Ralph, and Glen camped sixteen miles from where they'd left Stu. They had water, but no food.

A hooting owl in the darkness made Glen look around and realize:

Say, where's Kojak?



I--I can't remember seeing him the last couple of hours...

Kojak?
Hey, Kojak!
KO-JAK!

Glen's voice echoed lonesomely into the wasteland. No bark answered back...



Maybe he stayed with Stu, to help him.

Gloom settled over the trio once more. (A deeper gloom; they'd barely spoken a word since leaving their friend behind.)

Kojak had followed Glen across the continent; now...he was gone.



Maybe, Larry...

Maybe that's what happened.

In fact, it was exactly what had happened.

A few hours after padding away from Stu, Kojak had returned to him, bearing a gift--a rabbit he'd caught in his jaws.



I'll be a son of a bitch...

Good dog! Good Kojak!

Stu could barely get the word "Fetch" out, and the dog was already bringing him pieces of wood, with which Stu built a fire.

And cooked the rabbit.

And split it with his savior, the miracle dog Kojak.

Good dog. Beats that canned ham, doesn't it, boy?

And that was how, on the first night after their party had split, Stu ate while the others went hungry, and slept easy while their sleep was troubled by bad dreams and an uneasy feeling of rapidly approaching doom.

He dreamed he was on tour with the Shady Blues Connection, performing for a sold-out crowd at Madison Square Garden. The people were chanting for "Baby, Can You Dig Your Man?"



But I don't do that number anymore! I stopped doing that number when the world ended--

--Larry yelled, but their chanting was so loud now, the people couldn't hear his cries.

BABY, CAN YOU DIG YOUR MAN? BABY, CAN YOU DIG YOUR MAN? BABY

Worse, all the mikes on the stage were now, somehow, nine feet tall (they looked like stainless steel cobras), and Larry couldn't adjust any of them to his height--

--which is when he caught a glimpse of her, sitting in the front row.



Make it nice for the people, Larry. Don't be a taker. You've always been such a taker.



He was a little boy again; the same old Larry.

No, Mom, I'm not. I don't do that number anymore. I stopped doing that one when the world ended, honest--

Then he saw who was sitting next to his mother--



Charles Manson was there, and Richard Speck was there, and John Wayne Gacy was there, sitting around the Park Man, who was leading the chant:

Larry awoke.

On the one hand, it was an inadequacy dream. He used to have them before big gigs. What if you can't? What if you want to, but you can't?

On the other hand, it was a premonition dream. Soon, Larry thought. Whatever we're coming to, we're almost there.



SEPTEMBER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

Five miles west of
Freemont Junction...

...the trio spotted
Flagg's forces,
finally.



I make
out...eight
of them, with
rifles.

What do
we do now,
Larry?



We keep
going and
see if God
really is
with us.

They walked to the
men holding hands,
like schoolchildren.



My
name's Paul
Burlison. Who's
missing?

Stu Redman
met with an
accident on the
way here.
He's dead.

In that case, Lawrence Underwood, Glendon
Bateman, and Ralph Brentner, by virtue
of the power vested in me, I arrest
you and order you to
come peace--



In whose
name?



Burleson looked at Glen with contempt--mixed with something else...

You know who I speak for.

...I'll say it since you're so afraid. His name is Randall Flagg, AKA the Dark Man, AKA the Tall Man, AKA the Walkin' Dude...

Call him Beelzebub, too, because that's *also* his name. Call him Nyarlathotep and Ahaz and Astaroth and Seti and Anubis. His name is legion and he's an apostate of Hell and *you men* kiss his ass...

...just thought we should let it *alllll* hang out.

Larry thought, *if they weren't gonna shoot us before, they will now, but--*

Separate them and get them into the cars. Shoot anyone who gives you trouble.

And that was how Larry, Glen, and Ralph came to be arrested.

LAS VEGAS.

Six hours later, they were in the heart of the Park Man's territory. Where, Larry noted, the trains did seem to be running on time; Glen had been right about that.

They were put in separate jail cells, in separate wings of the prison.

I wouldn't mind a shower...

BARRY DORGAN, HEAD OF VEGAS SECURITY:

We'll see how cooperative you are.

How many of you are there? In the Zone?

Twenty-five thousand, but four thousand are under twelve so they get into the movies for free. Most nights, we play Bingo; the big prize is a twenty-pound turkey. Nice place, you know?

Dorgan closed his notebook.

Sighed.

So you don't want that shower...

I can't, man. Put yourself in my place.



SEPTEMBER TWENTY-NINTH.
TEN A.M.

clap-clap-clap-clap...

Glen was in his cell, writing with a piece of charcoal he'd found, when he heard the clucking bootheels...

...and felt the temperature drop ten degrees...

NOT THE POTTER'S WHEEL
BUT THE POTTER'S CLAY...

Suddenly, all the saliva in his mouth was gone. And his arthritis was much worse. Terrible, in fact.

Mr. Bateman, I'd like you to meet my associate. Lloyd Henreid, Glen Bateman, sociologist.

Glen, I've decided to let you go--haven't I, Lloyd?

Uh--
sure.
Yeah.

Glen could feel the arthritis sinking deeper into his joints, swelling them like fire.

Well,
fine.

Of course, I couldn't go without my friends.

Of course not. All you have to do is get down on your knees and ask me.

Well, there you are. And not *half* the bogeyman we all thought you must be.

NOT THE POTTER'S WHEEL
BUT THE POTTER'S CLAY...

Glen laughed at that, long and heartily...

...and as he laughed, the pain in his joints abated.



Oh, pardon me, it's just... we were all so frightened, and made such a business of you, but you're nothing...

I'm laughing at our foolishness as much as at your regrettable lack of substance...



Shoot him, Lloyd.



Oh, kill me yourself if you're going to kill me... Touch me with a finger and make my heart stop... Bring down the lightning from that overhead socket and cleave me in two...

Oh...oh, dear me!



Do it now, Lloyd, shoot him.



Might I suggest, Mr. Henreid, if you *have* to shoot somebody, why don't you shoot--





He lies...
you **know**
he lies...

It's all right,
Mr. Henreid...

Maybe...you
don't know any
better...



I got you out of jail, Lloyd, when you
were **starving**, it's men like Mr.
Bateman here you wanted to get
back at; **little** guys who
talk big...

Finish
it.



Lloyd did, remembering Poke,
remembering the Phoenix jail,
and the rat, and Trask--

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

--and how Trask's leg had
started to **look**, like a
piece of Kentucky
Fried Chicken...



It was only after his gun was empty
of bullets that Lloyd realized he
was crying, tears rolling down
his sunburned cheeks.

All right,
all right... Well
done... Well done,
Lloyd...



The jet stone around Lloyd's
neck was suddenly a key, a
small silver key.

I promised
you this, I think,
in another jail...

Bateman
was wrong...I
don't lie, do
I, Lloyd?

N-no...



SEPTEMBER THIRTIETH.

DAWN.



The old wound had closed in Larry.

He felt that the real Larry and the ideal one had finally merged into one living thing. He wasn't sure, but he thought his mother would've liked this new Larry. And Rita Blakemoor. Even that long-ago oral hygienist--



you ready?



I'm going to die. If there's a God--and now I believe there must be--that's his will. We're going to die and somehow all this will end as a result of our dying.

yes.



I heard gunshots. Who was killed yesterday? Glen or Ralph?

Bateman, for trying to escape.



For trying to escape...

One of these days, you'll be shot trying to escape.

Shut up.

Larry was hustled into a van with Ralph.

I heard someone saying everyone in Vegas is gonna be there. You think they're gonna crucify us, Larry?

That, or something like it.

We've hood us one helluva long road...

I just wish I knew what it was all for. All I can see is that he's gonna make a show of us to prove he's a big cheese.

I will fear no evil, Ralph...

But Larry was afraid.

So he thought of Lucy. His mother. Random thoughts like getting up for school on cold mornings. That time he found a skin magazine in the gutter. Watching the World Series with Yvonne Wetterlin...

...and underneath his fear, that new, deeper sense of peace held.

He had started to think of death as a staging area, a place to wait, the way you waited in a green room before going on to play.

Finally, the van stopped and its doors were thrown open.

Do as you're told, now.

They were on the lawn of the MGM Grand. In front of the hotel, there were two flatbed trucks. On each flatbed, a cage constructed of piping,

All around them, the crowd-animal. Flagg's followers, gathered for...what?



Larry and Ralph were stripped of their shirts and led one to each cage.

Ralph, who had spent most of his life working around machinery, saw the cuffs, saw the chains attached to trailer hitches, and understood immediately--



Larry--

The chains, the trucks--

They're going to pull us to pieces--

That's right, Grey meat. You and your friend are gonna ride the tiger.



Let them do their thing, Ralph--

Remember, we shall fear no evil--





You people know this is *wrong!*
We're being put to death because
Randall Flagg is *afraid* of us!
Remember the way we die!
And remember that next
time, it may be
your turn!



In the sudden hush
that fell over the
crowd, the only sound
was the sound of
those bootheels, a
sound Larry seemed
to remember, dimly,
from a night in
Brattleboro, Vermont,
last summer--



Larry knew, in his heart,
that this was his
watershed moment. The
apotheosis of his life.

Lloyd? The
scroll.

Know that I, **Randall Flagg**, put my name to this true bill on this thirtieth day of September, Year One of the Plague.



Flagg's not your name! Why don't you tell 'em your *real* name?



Know that these men, Lawrence Underwood and Ralph Brentner, are *spies*, here with seditious motives, who came with stealth in their hearts, under cover of darkness--



We came down Route 70 in broad daylight!



Know that these men and their cohorts are responsible for the sabotage bombings of the helicopters at Indian Springs--



Larry's eyes happened on a face in the crowd--

(Stan Bailey, Operations Chief at Indian Springs, though Larry didn't know it--)

And saw bewilderment and surprise there--



--and saw him mouthing something ridiculous, like "Can Man," even as Flagg continued his pronouncement.



--and that as *murderers*, they shall be put to death in an appropriate manner, to wit they shall be *pulled apart*.

Those of you with children are excused.

Hey, you people--







Returning from the desert, bearing gifts, it was Donald Merwin Elbert.

Known as the Trashcan Man, now and forever, world without end, hallelujah, amen.

I brought you the fire... Please...I'm sorry...

The big one, the big fire... The A-bomb...

My life for you, Mr. Flagg!



Lloyd--

Make him get rid of it, Lloyd! Make him take it back where he got it!

Trash...

Trashy, baby, you have to get rid of that thing. It's dangerous. You have to--



Look, Larry, look! In the sky! The Hand of God!



Larry looked. The ball of blue electricity Flagg had flicked off his finger had grown to tremendous size--

And did, in fact, now look like a hand--

No.





...evil...

In those last moments, Flagg became something monstrous, Larry saw--



*I will
fear no
evil--*



*I will
fear--*

*Then Flagg was simply gone;
for a split-second, his clothes
held his shape, then collapsed--*



*--no
evil--*



*Oh, s%#!#,
we're all
s%*ed--*

*Oh God, thank God,
Larry thought, I will
fear no evil, I will f*



*Then: Silent white
light filled the
world.*

*And the righteous and
the unrighteous alike
were consumed in a
holy fire.*

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE TRYOUT

A little over four years ago, legendary Marvel editor Ralph Macchio called to ask if I would be interested in adapting Stephen King's horror magnum opus *The Stand*. "How many issues?" I asked. "Thirty," Ralph said, which sounded...right. I considered Ralph's ask for maybe two seconds, then said I'd be thrilled to do it. "Terrific," Ralph said, "Would you mind doing a sample for us, seven or eight pages, for Stephen King to look over?" Here, there was a slightly longer pause when I thought, "The Stephen King? I'm gonna be auditioning for the guy who made me want to be a writer in the first place?" My nerves were assuaged when Ralph told me that the incredible Mike Perkins would be illustrating this "sample." I assumed we'd be asked to write and draw the first seven or eight pages of the adaptation. "Easy-peasy," I thought; "Sure," I said, "Happy to." Then Ralph said, "Great, we'd love for you guys to take a crack at the Hand of God scene." The climax of this issue you're holding in your hands. The climax of Stephen King's novel. No ramp-up. Just...go.

So we went.

Four years later, we returned, full-circle, to that scene in front of the MGM Grand with poor Larry and Ralph. Midway through the writing of this issue, I thought: "Hey, I wonder if...?" And there it was, buried on my hard drive, under four years of stuff. The pacing a little bit wonky, a little bit over-captioned, but more of it useable (and right) than not. Naturally we made some adjustments—like adding, for instance, an absolutely essential cameo—but four years later, I think it's pretty cool to look back and see that *something* clicked right out of the gate.

—Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, October 2011

Let me provide some background details here. I was working on the massively successful *Death of Captain America* and had decided that it was time to move on—perhaps developing a project from the beginning. Editorial were informed and I was subsequently asked if I'd be interested in illustrating an adaptation of Stephen King's *The Stand*. OH, YES!! (I think this acceptance was followed by a little victory jig). Before I could cement the gig into my schedule, though, it was important that I be approved by the aforementioned Mr. King and so was sent the tryout script by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. I'd been reading Roberto's work on a number of books including *Spider-Man*, *Nightcrawler* and *4*, and was impressed with his pedigree when dealing with the nuances of character—something the novel of *The Stand* has in abundance.

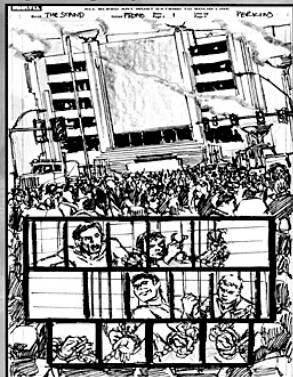
The pages were initially laid-out roughly so that editorial could make any inceptive changes and then I went straight into the finished pages. They were shown to Mr. King and I was on the project!

After almost four years it's remarkable that we haven't altered too much from those original five pages—I guess we just clicked from the outset and tapped into something that we could be proud of...even a few years down the line. A few character beats have been added here and there, my depiction of Ralph has changed significantly (I wasn't entirely au fait with the character descriptions when tackling the initial pages) and we've added a nice little King cameo in there but overall the tempo and layout still holds up strongly.

By the time you, the Constant Reader, see the words written down here I'll be almost wrapping up the fifth issue of this arc and will have only one more issue to go on this monumental 31-issue run. Truthfully, it will be a relief to finish the adaptation...but...it's been such a massive undertaking, a mountainous achievement, that I'll be a little bit sad to realize that it's not waiting for me every day that I awaken. I think it's about time that Roberto and I start considering that adaptation of *Salem's Lot* we chatted about!

—Mike Perkins, October 2011

Page 1: Rough Layout



Page 1: Finished Inks



PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

A nice big panel that sets the stage: We're in front of a huge hotel-casino in Vegas. It's high noon. In front of the hotel, flanking it, are two tacky golden pyramids. Also in front of the hotel, raised-up on platforms: Two steel cages: Ralph (on the left) in one of them; Larry (on the right) in the other. Both of them shirtless, looking skinny as hell, their ribs sticking out. Two chains ending in handcuff dangling into each of the cages (so, in total, four), leading to off-panel trucks that are idling (more on them in a bit). Also in Ralph's cage: Rat-man. Also in Larry's: Barry. They are acting as wardens. Around them, on the ground, are hundreds of people, gathered to watch the execution. It's like Woodstock, or New Orleans, girls on their boyfriends shoulders, people partying, drinking, etc. Barely controlled anarchy.

CAPTION: Welcome to Las Vegas.

CAPTION: Hell on Earth.

CAPTION: Site of the public executions of Ralph Brentner and Larry Underwood.

PANEL TWO.

Inside Ralph's cage, we have Ralph (on the left), calling across Rat-Man, who is holding one of the open handcuffs towards Ralph, but is looking towards the panel's right. Towards panel Three, in other words, 'cause he's addressing Larry.

RALPH: Larry—

RALPH: Larry, the chains—the trucks— They're going to pull us to pieces!

RAT-MAN: He's right, Wonderbread. You and your friend are goan ride the tiger.

PANEL THREE.

Right next to Panel Two. Larry on the left, Barry on the right. A smile on his face, Larry's ignoring Rat-Man's comment and is instead looking right at Barry, who is facing him, also holding an open handcuff, scowling.

LARRY: Isn't law and order a beautiful thing, Barry?

BARRY: Put out your arms, Underwood—

PANELS FOUR, FIVE, SIX, and SEVEN.

Four small "snapshot" panels running across the bottom of the page. The four handcuffs being snapped into place over Larry and Ralph's respective wrists.

SFX: Crickk!

SFX: Crickk!

SFX: Crickk!

SFX: Crickk!

NO CAPTION OR DIALOGUE.

Page 2: Rough Layout



Page 2: Finished Inks



Page 2: Color Version 1



Page 2: Revised Color



PAGE THREE.

PANEL ONE.

Focusing on Randall, standing on those steps, now reading—proclaiming—from the unrolled scroll, Lloyd standing behind him. The multitudes, if we see them, listening attentively.

FLAGG: Know that I, Randall Flagg, put my name to this true bill on this thirtieth day of September, the year nineteen-hundred and ninety, now know as the Year One, Year of the Plague.

PANEL TWO.

Cutting over to Ralph, in his steel cage. Grasping those bars, his head poked through a set of bars, his neck craning to face the off-panel Flagg.

RALPH: Flagg's not your name! Why don't you tell em your real name?

PANEL THREE.

Back to Flagg. Not fazed by Ralph's interruption at all; in fact, from the tiny smile curling his lips, it's almost like he enjoyed it.

FLAGG: Know that these men, Lawrence Underwood and Ralph Brentner, are spies, here with seditious motives, who came with stealth in their hearts, under cover of darkness—

PANEL FOUR.

An echo of Panel Two, focusing on Larry, in his steel cage. He's speaking/yelling loud enough to be heard, but he seems...less hysterical than Ralph.

LARRY: We came down Route 70 in broad daylight!

PANEL FIVE.

Back to Flagg, still reading from the scroll, finishing up now.

FLAGG: Know that these men are murders, and that, as such, they shall be put to death in an appropriate manner, to wit they shall be pulled apart.

PANEL SIX.

Staying on Flagg, but—now that he's finished his proclamation—he has rolled up the scroll and has turned to hand it back to Lloyd, who—in this panel—is receiving it readily. (It's also this exact moment that someone from the crowd chooses to interrupt the proceedings, with the "Hey, you people—" in the tail-less balloon in this panel.)

FLAGG: Those of you with children are excused.

BALLOON: Hey, you people—



Page 3: Finished Inks



**PAGE FOUR.****PANEL ONE.**

Cutting back to the crowd, we see someone—Whitney Horgan—pushing his way through the people, elbowing them aside, yelling to be heard. (NOTE: The people around Whitney are responding variously, some recoiling, others angry at the disturbance, etc.)

CAPTION: Whitney Horgan.

CAPTION: Who found his conscience, at last.

WHITNEY: This ain't right!

WHITNEY: We was Americans once! I wasn't much, just a cook, but I know this ain't how Americans act! Listening to a murderin' freak in cowboy boots—

PANEL TWO.

A panel that looks across both cages, so we see Larry and Ralph staring at the off-panel Whitney with deep confusion. A "What the hell is this about?" look on their faces...

NO CAPTION OR DIALOGUE.

PANEL THREE.

Back to Flagg, who is Mr. Cool in this panel, completely unflustered, gently walking down a few more steps, starting to lift one of his hands up towards the off-panel Whitney, blue energy just barely starting to crackle around his fingers.

FLAGG: Whitney.

FLAGG: Whitney, you should have kept quiet. I would have spared you...

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Whitney, who is now pointing at the off-panel Flagg, filled with an enormous fear, his eyes wide, as pale as a ghost. NOTE: Behind him, the crowd is backing away, knowing that something bad is about to happen.

WHITNEY: You—

WHITNEY: You ain't a man at all! You're the devil!

PANEL FIVE.

Cutting back to Flagg, who has finished lifting his one arm, in the off-panel Whitney's direction. A ball of blue fire has leapt from Flagg's hand is spiraling towards Whitney. It's like an incredibly cool magic trick, almost.

FLAGG: Yea. Yea, that's right.

FLAGG: I am.

PANEL SIX.

Back to Whitney. The ball of blue magic fire has reached him and expanded—so that his entire body is being consumed by the blue flame. NOTE: Although Whitney is convulsing/contorting his body in agony, he is not screaming—or, at least, we can't hear him screaming—because his lips have been fused shut by the flame...

SFX: WHOOOOOSH!!!

Page 4: Rough Layout



Page 4: Finished Inks



Page 4: Color Version 1



Page 4: Revised Color



PAGE FIVE.

PANEL ONE.

Another panel that shows us both Ralph and Larry, in their respective cages. Looking at the off-panel Whitney, their ashen, scared faces bathed in white and blue light. Chanting and praying in unison...

LARRY & RALPH: I will fear no evil... I will fear no evil... I will fear no evil...

PANEL TWO.

Back to Flagg (who looks slightly pissed-off in this panel), on those steps, now looking around the crowd, challenging them with his look, daring anyone else to speak-up.

FLAGG: Is there anyone else here who disagrees with my sentence? If so, let him speak now!

PANEL THREE.

Cut to: A shot of the crowd, standing around the smoldering body of Whitney, which lies at their feet (face-down, mercifully), smoking but no longer burning. The people in the crowd are all keeping their mouths shut tight-out of respect and fear. NOTE: Above Whitney's body, the ball of blue flame has re-gathered itself and is now rising...

NO CAPTION OR DIALOGUE.

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Flagg, a close-up on his satisfied face. Getting back to business, likety-split.

FLAGG: Then let-

PANEL FIVE.

Back to another shot of the crowd, with people turning around, away from Flagg, to look behind them, at whatever is moving its way through the crowd, towards the clearing where the main event is taking place. We hear snatches of the murmurings that are passing through the crowd, from person-to-person...

BALLOON: Man...

BALLOON: Can Man..

BALLOON: Trash...

BALLOON: Trashy...

PANEL SIX.

Cut back to another close-up on Flagg. Who has just turned around to face the assembled crowd again, an eyebrow arched. An expression of anger--and worry--flashing across his features.

FLAGG: Who?

Page 5: Rough Layout



Page 5: Finished Inks



Page 5: Color Version 1



Page 5: Revised Color



Next: "Whatever it is, the birds feel it, too..."



"Marvel's vision of *The Stand* remains one of the most faithful on the market...Aguirre-Sacasa and Perkins are firing on all cylinders."

-IGN.COM



The end of the world has happened. 99% of the population is dead, killed by the mysterious superflu nicknamed Captain Trips. The remaining one percent has chosen sides. Those drawn to Mother Abigail and her light have founded a community called the Boulder Free Zone in Colorado. Those drawn to Randall Flagg and his darkness have congregated in Las Vegas.

Now, war has erupted between Good and Evil.

Four of Mother Abigail's followers have headed for Las Vegas to make their stand against Flagg. Only three will arrive. What happens next will determine how humankind rebuilds itself--in hope, or in terror.

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, the upcoming *Fantastic Four: Season One*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale that begins at the end of the world.

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